



Dear America,

You turn 250 on July 4<sup>th</sup> and that number deserves more than a moment's pause. It represents something genuinely rare in the arc of human civilization: a nation founded not on ethnicity or geography or hereditary power, but on a set of principles. Liberty is the birthright of every person, government derives its just authority from the consent of the governed, and each generation inherits the obligation to hand something better to the next. Today, 250 years later, that experiment continues.

In Mobile, Alabama, we have a particular relationship with the American story, one that predates the Republic itself.

French colonists established Mobile in 1702, more than seven decades before the Declaration of Independence was signed. Our city served as the capital of French Louisiana, then passed to British and Spanish rule before becoming part of the United States following the War of 1812. Mardi Gras, now celebrated across the country, was first observed on this continent right here, along the banks of the Mobile River.

The Port of Mobile, one of the oldest and most storied commercial harbors in the South, has moved the lifeblood of American commerce for more than three centuries: furs and timber in the colonial era, cotton through the antebellum years, coal and steel through the industrial age, and today a diversified mix of goods that connects our region to markets on every continent.

We have also borne the costs of American history. Mobile was a Confederate stronghold during the Civil War, and the Battle of Mobile Bay, where Admiral David Farragut issued his famous command, was fought in our waters. Brookley Field, our former military installation, trained thousands of airmen and served as a vital logistics hub during World War II. And from our shipyards, Mobile contributed to the war effort that few cities of our size could match. Alabama Dry Dock and Shipbuilding Company became one of the most productive shipbuilding operations in the nation, launching vessels that served in every theater of the war.

Mobile's shipbuilding legacy continues today with thousands of skilled workers continuing a tradition of maritime craftsmanship that has defined this city for generations. Our community has sent generation after generation into service, and we carry that legacy with both humility and pride.

The Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce has been part of this city's story since 1836, making us one of the oldest chambers in the country. We were here when Mobile was a booming cotton port, here through the hardships of war and reconstruction, here through the industrial transformations of the 20th century, and here today as our region grows into one of the most dynamic economies along the Gulf Coast.

What that long history teaches is this: America is not a completed work. It never has been. It is a continuous act of construction, carried forward by communities, businesses and individuals who decide, in each generation, that the future is worth building.

The Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce has operated on that conviction since our founding. We believe that when business leaders, civic institutions and community members organize around a shared purpose, they accomplish what none could achieve alone. Our members demonstrate that belief every day, creating jobs, expanding opportunity, investing in workforce development and supporting the next generation of leaders . This is community building in its truest form, and it is what chambers of commerce have always done best.

As America marks this singular milestone, I find my confidence in the nation's future rooted not in abstractions, but in the work I witness here at home, in the businesses expanding at the Port, in the manufacturers choosing Mobile for their next investment, in the young professionals discovering their capacity for leadership and civic contribution.

That work reflects the enduring American premise: that liberty and opportunity, paired with responsibility and community, produce something no government can mandate and no crisis can permanently extinguish.

Two hundred and fifty years is a long time. It is also, in the life of a nation with this much still ahead of it, just the beginning.

Happy birthday, America. Few cities can claim a deeper place in your story than Mobile, and none are more committed to the chapters still to be written.

**Bradley Byrne**  
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**Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce**